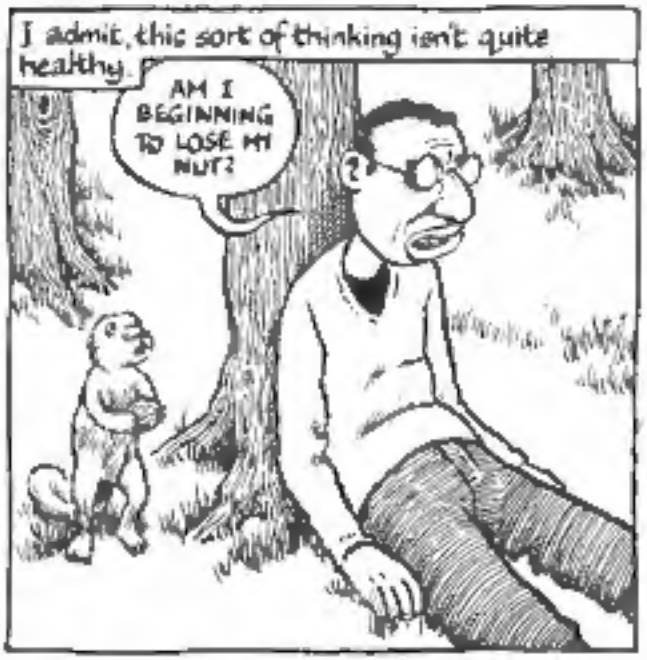
MEANWHILE in AMERICA
by Joe Sacco ©2004
I recently became obsessed with traveling over the Atlantic on a massive passenger ship. Unfortunately, all I can afford for now is a large plastic model of the SS. United States, the fastest, sleekest liner that ever sailed, but I have to call my pal Tony to put it together.
THE SCALE LOOKS A LITTLE WRONG. BUT I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
AFTER TRIALS IN THE BATHTUB, IT'LL GO RIGHT HERE OVER THE FIREPLACE.
Tony has been building models—mostly airplanes—since before we were in high school together.
Tony loves airplanes so I never quite understood why he dropped out of a program in aircraft maintenance some years ago.
I'M AN UNDERACHIEVER.
I DON'T BLAME ANYONE FOR WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME EXCEPT ME.
Now he works part-time at a fabric store. He's a "fix-it guy, a janitor. If it requires getting up on a ladder, I do it."
He used to have a light industrial job doing circuit-board work. The work was deadeningly repetitious, wages were just above minimum wage, employee turnover was high, orders were up, the quota was increased, and Tony found himself working 60 hours a week. In the end, he snapped.
YOU PEOPLE ARE NUTS!
He quit. He says he would have "gone postal" at that moment if he had a gun (though he assures me he would have fired into the machines).
At Holman's, over meatloaf and onion rings, I reveal who's responsible for his oppression.
I CALL IT FUCKING CAPITALISM.
I CALL IT WORKING PEOPLE TOO HARD.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE CORRECT MARXIST INTERPRETATION.
No, Tony would never make a good revolutionary cadre. He won't listen to my table-thumping thesis about how running-dog industrialists exploit noble proletarians like himself! In fact, he sees big government as the problem—
IF IT HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH MONEY, THE GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO FIND OUT HOW TO GET IT FROM YOU.
Tony recalls those 60-hour weeks and how much of his overtime pay was siphoned off by the tax man.
I'M NOT A PRO-TAX GUY. I SAY IF YOU EARN IT, YOU SHOULD KEEP MOST OF IT.
I'm sure those views have them rubbing their hands together at the White House. And they'll be happy to know that he's been put off by Kerry ever since the senator became the Democrats' presumptive nominee.
HE SEEMS SO MUCH DIFFERENT NOW. HE WAS MORE RELAXED BEFORE.
NOW HE'S TALKING LIKE A POLITICIAN.

But Democrats take heart! Not only is Tony socially liberal, he's kinda creeped out by the Bush administration.
THERE'S SOMETHING THEY'RE NOT LETTING US IN ON.
CHENEY WORRIES ME. ASHCROFT WORRIES ME.
BECAUSE YOU NEVER SEE THEM.
I DON'T SEE CHENEY GOING TO AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
CHENEY IS ALMOST A BORMANN
Bormann? Hitler's henchman?
MAYBE THAT'S TOO HARSH.
Tony doesn't think Iraq is a "quagmire," but he wasn't so hot on starting a preventative war in the first place.
I'M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THAT.
I'M DISAPPOINTED IN POWELL. I DON'T THINK HE'S BEEN AN EFFECTIVE SECRETARY OF STATE.
Y'think he caved in to the hawks?
YOU CAN'T BE A TOADY. YOU CAN'T JUST ROLL OVER.
THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF AN ELECTION. IF YOU FEEL THAT WAY, YOU GET RID OF THESE PEOPLE.
SORRY. I DON'T LIKE TO JUDGE PEOPLE. I'M NOT IN THEIR SHOES.
Judge "people"? You've got every right to judge politicians. You just did. You said Powell was a "toady," that Cheney-
I FEEL THE COUNTRY IS RUNNING IN A FAIRLY SMOOTH MANNER.
YOU'RE CONTRADICTING YOURSELF.
I GUESS IT SHOWS I'M CONFLICTED.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE FATE OF THE FUCKING COUNTRY.
IF YOU SHUT OUT ONE SIDE, YOU MIGHT SHUT OUT SOMETHING THEY HAVE THAT'S OF VALUE.
Can you tell Tony's an undecided voter? And he's turned off by the extremes, by the vitriol. He doesn't understand, for example, the hatred some people feel for Bush.
ALL THIS BLOODTHIRSTINESS...
IT'S LIKE NAZISM.
"IT'S THE OPPOSITION! KILL THEM!"
FOR GOD'S SAKE, I DON'T WANT ANYONE DEAD.
I don't want anyone dead either, but I wish Tony's blood boiled a little hotter. By all rights a working-class stiff like him should be smashing the state, or at least joining the Democratic camp. Instead he's doggedly middle-of-the-road.
IT'S HARD TO BE BALANCED.
I DON'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY TO GO OTHER THAN TO BE BALANCED.
IT'S LIKE AIRPLANES. THEY CANNOT FLY UNLESS THEY'RE BALANCED.
But I don't see an airplane. I see a ship headed for the rocks! The wheel is in the hands of an incompetent! Passengers like Tony have to mutiny before it's too late!
I'LL TRY TO GET TO IT SOON.
TAKE YOUR TIME. NO RUSH.
But now we're talking about a plastic kit.

MEANWHILE in AMERICA
by Joe Sacco ©2004
I finally went to see 'Farenheit 9/11,' and halfway through the docuganda, someone burst into the theater and yelled-
YOU'RE ALL SUCKING MICHAEL MOORE'S DICK!
As the election draws nearer, from sea to shining sea, it seems the American people are becoming unhinged.
Did our unravelling start at the top when Vice President Dick Cheney told a congressman to-
GO
FUCK
YOUR-SELF.
But take pity on the poor conservatives. Imagine how they must feel with the faces of their Most Hated Ones, Bill "Anti-Christ" Clinton and his Jezebel, Hillary, beaming down from every Barnes and Noble in the country.
ON SALE HERE!
BILL CLINTON'S "MY LIFE" and HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON'S "LIVING HISTORY"
The Clintons seem to have the perennial power to enrage even the most easygoing Republicans, like this guy, who attributes a Biblical darkness to them and told me they will sabotage Kerry's campaign to set Hillary up for a run in 2008.
SHE'S DRIVEN BY POWER.
HILLARY IS LIKE A SNAKE READY TO SHED ITS SKIN.
But the bile seems to be brimming over across party lines. Recently a Democrat I know told me-
I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT THE MORE AMERICANS THAT GET KILLED IN IRAQ, THE LESS CHANCE BUSH HAS OF WINNING THE ELECTION...
Have we reduced our electoral desires to such ugly equations?
And who am I to talk? Haven't I secretly hoped unemployment figures will inch higher till after November?
HA HA HA! ANOTHER 20,000 LAID OFF!
MORE EGG ON BUSH'S FACE!
WILL WORK FOR FOOD

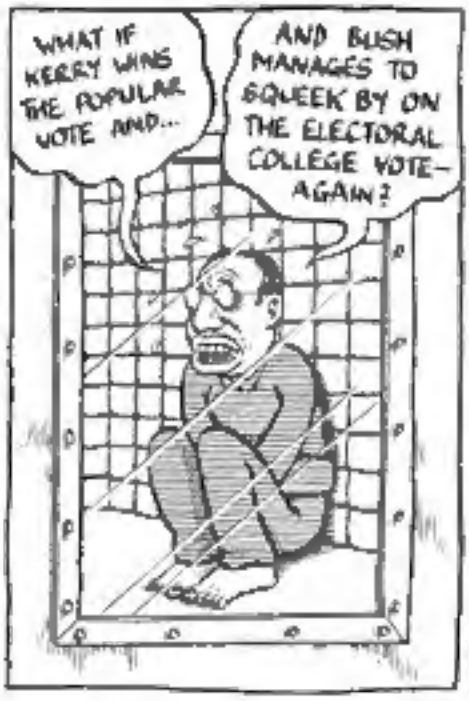
And haven't I despaired when consumer confidence has risen?
OH GOD! ALL THESE HAPPY SHOPPERS WILL BE VOTING REPUBLICAN!


I admit, this sort of thinking isn't quite healthy.
AM I BEGINNING TO LOSE MY NUT?

But the stakes, we are told over and over, have never been higher. And, after all, ever since Bush characterized our age as a fight between good and evil—
YER EITHER WITH US OR AGAIN' US.
—some of us have embraced his apocalyptical hyperbole and placed him and his cronies squarely in the evil camp.

WE'RE ALL SO WOUND UP...
THE MOOD IS SO POISONOUS...
AND I'VE BEGUN TO OBSESS ON HORRIBLE SCENARIOS.

WHAT IF THE BALLOTS—?
WHAT IF THE SUPREME COURT—?


WHAT IF KERRY WINS THE POPULAR VOTE AND...
AND BUSH MANAGES TO SQUEEK BY ON THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTE—AGAIN?

CAN WE TAKE IT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN?
CAN THIS COUNTRY TAKE IT?
HE COULDN'T TAKE IT.
WE'LL HAVE TO INCREASE HIS DOSE.